

MONTANA

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**LOCAL ADVISORY
COUNCILS FOR
VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL
EDUCATION**

**ORGANIZATION
AND
STRUCTURE**

Leadership Guide

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FOREWORD

FROM THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT, MARCH 1990

The role of advisory councils in vocational and technical education over the years has involved advocacy, employment assistance, curriculum development, evaluation, as well as other functions. All of these functions comprise parts of the goal of program improvement. How to effect program improvement concerns many vocational technical education instructors and administrators across the country.

Whether advisory groups are called local advisory councils (LAC), vocational instructional programs (VIP) advisory committees, or local technical committees (LTC) is a matter of local choice. For purposes of this handbook, the term “*Local Advisory Council (LAC)*” will be used.

The purpose of this handbook is to assist vocational instructors and administrators to fully involve local advisory councils in the process of improving the quality of vocational technical programs. Providing guides for instructors in building a solid working relationship with council members, the handbook helps instructors prepare for council meetings and suggests specific response mechanisms from council members. This feedback allows each council member to record observations relative to the program to avoid the frequent criticism of poor communication between the council and the school. Local advisory councils can be effective partners in program improvement because they know precisely what is expected of a prospective employee in the business or industry they represent. Blending the expertise of advisory council members with the instructional skills of the vocational instructor precedes building a high quality vocational technical education program.

PART 1. FUNCTION OF LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

COUNCIL PURPOSE

The primary purpose of a local advisory council (LAC) is to help schools and institutions improve the quality of instruction in programs that prepare workers in occupations requiring vocational technical education. These councils are officially appointed by institutions or governing boards of local educational agencies and are drawn primarily from the private sector with appropriate public sector representation. Members are volunteers who share an expert knowledge of the job tasks and competency requirements for specific occupations.

Local advisory councils have no legislative, administrative, or programmatic authority.

COUNCIL ROLE

Local advisory councils have three major roles. They are to **advise, assist, and provide support and advocacy** for quality vocational technical education.

In an advising role, the local advisory council assesses specific areas of the vocational technical education program and formulates suggestions and recommendations designed to improve that specific area. Suggestions and/or recommendations should be presented formally to the administration. Examples of recommendations could include the modification of curriculum content, the purchase of new instructional materials or high-tech equipment, the adoption of a new safety policy, etc.

In an assisting role, the local advisory council helps the instructor or administrator carry out specific activities. Examples could include judging competitive skill events, setting up a scholarship program, obtaining media coverage for special events, etc.

In a support and advocacy role, the local advisory council promotes the quality of vocational technical programs throughout the community. Examples could include talking to legislators, showing support for vocational technical education at board meetings, writing articles for local newspapers, etc.

CHAIRPERSON'S ROLE

The chairperson plays a critical role in maximizing the effectiveness of the council. The chairperson sets the tone for the council because it is he or she who helps develop the agenda and moves the council through each agenda item. The chairperson must be aware of the role and responsibilities of the position of chairperson. There are four major elements to becoming a successful chairperson:

- **Keep the council's purpose in mind.**

The local advisory council's one overriding purpose is to help improve and modernize the vocational technical program it is serving. The council's role is to advise, assist, and become an active supporter and advocate of vocational technical education. It has no legislative, administrative, or programmatic authority. The council works cooperatively with school officials in planning and carrying out council work. The chairperson should help members avoid possible conflicts of interest.

- **Take charge.**

To be effective, advisory council members must feel that their time and expertise are being utilized. Members need action in order to gain a sense of self-fulfillment. The chairperson, together with the educator, needs to create an environment that will result in an effective and successful committee. Draw on the expertise of individual council members. Help make them feel a part of the council process. Don't let any one member or school official dominate the discussion. Make council assignments to individual members who show the most enthusiasm for a given topic. Call on noncontributing members to give them a sense of belonging. The main objective of the chair is to create and maintain a cohesive, working group.

- **Expert results.**

An effective council is one that knows in advance that something positive will occur as a result of their work. To have something occur, the council must be goal directed. The council must decide what it is that they want to accomplish and then develop a plan to accomplish it. The chairperson guides the members through a series of discussions resulting in a program of work that will lead to an anticipated outcome.

- **Be organized.**

Well-organized council meetings add to the council's effectiveness. The chair should meet with school officials at least two weeks prior to a council meeting and plan an agenda. The agenda should include minutes of the most recent council meeting, standing committee and subcommittee reports, officer reports, and unfinished and new business. The chair should pace the meeting to complete all agenda items in an organized way and on time. The council should know well in advance the date, time, and location of all meetings. A good practice is to set a tentative date for the next committee meeting prior to adjourning.

EDUCATOR'S ROLE

The role of the educator in developing and working with an advisory council is critical to the effectiveness, value, and success of the council. In order for the council members to gain a sense of satisfaction from serving on an advisory council, the educator must actively promote the idea that he or she truly believes in the concept of advisory committees and is willing to accept and carry out the council's actions. Effective guidelines for educators in working with advisory council's include:

- **Appoint leaders to the committee.**

Nominate persons whose opinions are respected. Even outspoken critics often become supportive once they know all the facts. The value of any recommendation of the council will be essentially equal to the collective respect that the community, institution, and/or board have for the members of the council.

- **Provide information and follow through.**

Provide accurate and concise information so sound conclusions and recommendations can be made. Members need all the information necessary to make informed decisions and recommendations. They will appreciate not being overburdened with a flow of unnecessary or unrelated information.

To earn the respect of the members of the council, be honest and candid with the members. Don't hesitate to lay out actual or potential problems or to point out worthwhile accomplishments. The council needs to be able to see both sides of the coin.

It is important to always follow through with any reasonable request from or promised to the council. If you cannot comply with a request, give the council the rationale for why it is not possible to carry out their request.

- **Provide guidance and support.**

New members should be oriented to their responsibilities and tasks because the council's success depends on how well the members understand their role. Likewise, newly elected chairpersons need direction and guidance to grow into a leadership role. The instructor should meet with the chairperson to review this leadership guide, council bylaws, and past accomplishments, and to answer any questions the chairperson may have.

Available services such as clerical work and arranging meetings and other details should be discussed with the council. The person or persons who will assist the council should understand that this will be part of their responsibility.

- **Expert results.**

Let the council members know that they are important, that they can provide valuable service to the program, and that results are expected. It may be desirable to discuss this expectation as well as an accurate assessment of their time when first discussing possible membership with an individual. This type of attitude and expectation will enhance member attendance at meetings and activities.

The instructor should make every effort not to sway the council with his or her personal bias or with recommendations that may be viewed as a conflict of interest.

One of the best ways to encourage attendance and participation is to give the council real problems and situations to discuss. The persons who help plan the council meetings should

assure that the meeting will actually solicit the input of members and help them to see the value of the council's contributions.

- **Recognize outstanding members.**

Reward mechanisms are important to every organization because they encourage attendance and involvement. Moreover, recognition efforts attract the attention and interest of other qualified people who may someday serve in the organization. Additionally, they bring public attention and goodwill to the organization because they demonstrate that the organization appreciates the efforts of its members.

Reward and recognition are especially important to local advisory councils because members are not paid for their efforts. Rewards should not be given indiscriminately but should be based on actual contribution to the council's activity. They must be distributed equitably, concentrating on individual efforts.

The best types of rewards or recognition are those that can increase productivity, improve council interaction, and increase member satisfaction. The strategies need not be elaborate. Most members are willing to attend regularly and work hard, as long as their talents are used in tasks that involve them in the program, their recommendations are seriously considered, and they are given feedback about the recommendations and efforts.

Using the meetings as a means of reporting program activities and asking the council to address trivial matters is counterproductive. The best reward is to ask for advice and respond to it. Opportunities and ways in which council members may be recognized by school or other vocational technical education officials include:

- Issue press releases announcing member appointments.
- Report at meetings on the result of adopting council recommendations and the ways the council has been of service.
- Invite members to visit programs to see the actual results of their recommendations.
- Invite members to attend special vocational technical education events.
- Introduce advisory council members at vocational technical education meetings or events.
- Send personal letters to council members about the results of their advice and recommendations.
- Send each member a letter of thanks and appreciation, signed by the appropriate school official, at the end of the year.
- Send a letter of appreciation to the advisory council member's supervisor and/or company, explaining the good job being done by the member and thanking the company for its support.
- Hold a banquet in honor of the council and present a certificate of service to each member.
- Schedule a meeting that the chief administrator of the school or institution can attend.
- Place members' names on display board or plaque at the school or institution.

- Be sure that announcements and reports made by administrators about the program include references to the council members.
- Involve all members in developing the program of work for the year.
- Send a personal note in recognition of special events such as birthdays, anniversaries, and promotions. Include your thanks for the member's work on the council.

PART 2. PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

An organizational structure and operating procedures of the local advisory council should be developed by the council members. The structure and procedures are generally developed as a part of the council's constitution and bylaws. This section outlines areas for council members to consider as they develop the rules and procedures to govern the operation of the council.

Included in this section are size of councils, term of service, selection of members, selection process, selection and duties of officers, orientation of new members, charter or constitution, and bylaws.

This information is suggestive only and should not be viewed as the only process for establishing a local advisory council. The charter/constitution and bylaws should be adapted to meet the needs of the local school/institution.

SIZE OF THE COMMITTEE

The size of the council may vary by size of the community, scope of the vocational technical education offering, diversity of business and industries in the community, and purpose of the council. Effective advisory councils should be large enough to reflect the diversity of the community, yet small enough to be managed effectively.

TERM OF SERVICE

A rotational, three-year term of service most easily allows for continuity and change. One-third of the total membership will be appointed beginning each year after the first year of operation. To establish this rotation with a new council, the members draw lots for one-, two-, or three-year terms, with one-third of the council in each category. Current members or new members are reappointed or appointed as terms expire.

SELECTION OF MEMBERS

To provide effective communication between the vocational technical programs and the community, local advisory council membership must be representative of the total school service area. Members may be selected from the following:

- Geographical sections of the school service area.
- All types of business and industry, particularly those predominant in the area.
- Both labor and management.
- Economic development personnel or local Chamber of Commerce members.
- Regional employment and training personnel.
- Job Service personnel.
- Parents of vocational technical students.
- Former vocational technical students.
- Various age levels.

- Different educational levels.
- Both sexes, handicapped individuals, and racial and ethnic minorities found in the area served by the program.

This representation will include the points of view of segments of the community being served by vocational technical education. A vocational technical instructor and a representative of the administration should serve as nonvoting, consulting members. Although the administrative representative need not be present at all meetings, the vocational technical instructor should attend all meetings to provide information and participate in discussion.

Some personal qualities that are desirable in members are:

- **Interest**

Choose motivated persons who express sincere interest in the program. Members must be willing to devote the energy and attention required to do a good job. This means being dedicated both to their occupation and to the training process.

- **Availability**

Seek members who will be available in terms of time and location. Members are expected to attend meetings, work on projects, and work in the community on behalf of the educational program.

- **Character**

Seek members who have earned the confidence of others in the community. Their good reputation will enhance the program's standing within the community. Members should have the courage to express their own ideas and to respect, tolerate, and work with ideas expressed by others.

- **Skill/Experience**

Seek members who are knowledgeable about the target occupations of the educational programs. Usually this means selecting members who have work experience in the occupation. Seek members who demonstrate good communication skills, administrative skills, social vision, intelligence, and leadership.

SELECTION PROCESS

Members may be elected or appointed, depending on the policy of the school or institution. One procedure for nominating members is for the vocational technical instructor(s) and the appropriate administrator to recommend a list of possible nominees to the governing board and/or administrative official. Another procedure that is sometimes used is for the school/institution to contact specific businesses or organizations and have them select someone

from their business or organization to serve on the council. The invitation to serve should be in writing.

Following the nominee's acceptance of the invitation to serve, an appointment letter should be sent from the board and/or administrative official. This letter should also state the term for which appointment is made. The appointment should also be released to the local media for publicity.

The local advisory council chair should contact the new members to welcome them to the council and to provide them with appropriate material, such as a member's guide.

SELECTION AND DUTIES OF OFFICERS

The success of the council depends in part on the leadership ability of the officers.

Election of officers may be at the first or last meeting of the school year. Elections held during the last meeting of the school year are preferable. In this way, officers are experienced members and they can plan for the next year during the summer. Also, the first meeting of the new year can be reserved for orienting new members and for establishing the program of work.

Suggested officers are a chair, a vice chair, and a secretary. Procedures, personal characteristics, and duties for each position follow.

- **Chair**

The chair's leadership is the key to the council's success. A member other than a school representative should chair councils. The chair should possess skills and characteristics such as:

- Experience in business/industry in the community served by the vocational technical program.
- Ability to manage meetings, plan and adhere to schedules, involve members in ongoing activities, and reach closure and consensus on issues.
- Skills in oral and written communications as well as willingness to make appearances before school and community representatives to present, explain, and justify recommendations.
- Experience as a council member.
- Ability to delegate responsibility as well as willingness to accept responsibility for the council's actions.
- Personal characteristics such as empathy, fairness, tolerance, sound judgment, and attentiveness.

The responsibilities of the chair include:

- Work with school and community representatives to plan and carry out the council's program of work.

- Prepare meeting agendas and assist school representatives in handling details regarding meetings.
 - Preside at meetings.
 - Arrange activity and keep group efforts focused and all members involved in tasks.
 - Delegate tasks and follow-up work.
 - Arrange for presenting background information and reports to the council.
 - Appoint standing committees and subcommittees.
 - Represent the council at official meetings and functions.
 - Submit recommendations of the council to appropriate administrators and groups.
 - Follow up on council recommendations or actions.
- **Vice Chair**

The skills and responsibilities of the vice chair are identical to those of the chair.

- **Secretary**

The secretary records meeting minutes and performs many clerical duties. Councils may use a school representative in this position because of the person's access to typing and reproduction facilities.

The qualifications and skills of the secretary include:

- Experience on the council and an understanding of the vocational technical program.
- Ability to organize detailed material into a meaningful whole.
- Writing skills.
- Ability to work with school personnel, employment representatives, and council members.

The responsibilities of the secretary include the following:

- Take minutes at meetings; prepare and distribute minutes.
- Mail agenda, announcements, minutes, and other information to members.
- Help assemble and distribute necessary background information to members.
- Correspond with representatives of school and community as needed.

ORIENTATION OF NEW MEMBERS

New members should be oriented to their responsibilities and tasks. The council's success depends on how well members understand their role. Orientation should continue, as needed, throughout the school year.

Included in the orientation would be a review of the member's guide⁷⁸, the council's constitution and bylaws, and past accomplishments; a tour of the facilities; and presentations about the program by the instructor, program graduates, and current trainees. Discussion of

previous council work plans, current issues within the program, employer responsibilities in work-related activities, and what is expected of council members should also be included.

CHARTER OR CONSTITUTION

Effective local advisory councils are guided by a charter or constitution in which the governing board presents guidelines and policy for the council in the following areas:

- Name of the council and its governing board
- Purpose
- Relationship to the educational governing board
- Membership
- Organizational structure
- Procedural rules or bylaws

The charter or constitution must be a written document, included as part of the official policy guidelines of the local educational agency or institution. Once approved, only the governing board can amend it. The council develops its bylaws and operational rules.

Illustrations 2-1 is a sample charter or constitution for a local advisory council. The example is an illustration only and is not intended to be all-inclusive. The constitution or charter should be tailored to the needs and requirements of the program and the school/institution.

BYLAWS

Bylaws are operational rules. They cover the operation of the council, selection of officers, appointment of subcommittees, responsibilities of members, and establishment of the program of work.

Because the rules of operation may need to change as the program of work or council membership changes, the bylaws should be reviewed and discussed at the beginning of each school year. Illustration 2-2 is a sample of council bylaws and is not intended to be all-inclusive.

ILLUSTRATION 2-1. SAMPLE CHARTER

Charter (Name of Program) Local Advisory Council

I. Name

The Council will be called the (name of council).

II. Purpose

The council is created for the purpose of working with the (name of vocational program) and will limit its activities to advising, assisting, and advocating on matters that directly concern the instructional program. The council's work should be designed to help (school/instruction) improve the quality of instruction.

III. Relationship of Council to Educational Governing Board

It is the role and sole prerogative of the board and/or administrative official to enact policy. The local advisory council may offer recommendations for and provide information relevant to policy about the instructional program to the administration and instructors.

IV. Membership

Composition. The local advisory council will consist of (number of) members. Members will be selected and appointed by the board and/or administrative official. Local advisory council members will constitute a cross-section of the employment community, with special emphasis on private sector employees and employers. Moreover, a majority of the council membership should be employers and employees in the target jobs.

Term. A term of office will last for three years, with one-third of the membership appointed each year. Terms may be renewable and will begin on (date).

V. Officers

The council will have a chair, a vice chair, and a secretary who are elected by the membership for one-year terms. Elections for the next term will be held at the last meeting of the present term.

VI. Procedural Rules

Bylaws. The council will draft and adopt a set of written bylaws. Bylaws require a two-thirds vote for adoption or change.

Meetings. The council will meet at least (number of) times per year. Written notices will be mailed to members at least (number of) days before each meeting.

Minutes. Minutes of each meeting will be kept. Copies will be mailed to the board, local administrator, instructors, and council membership.

Recommendations and Reports. Council recommendations and reports will be submitted in writing to the board and/or administrative official. Documents will include both suggested action and justification for suggestions. The board and/or administrative official will respond/react to such recommendations/reports in writing.

Dismissal/Replacement. Members who are absent without reasonable cause from (number of) successive meetings will be considered to have resigned their seat. Members desiring to leave the council prior to the date their term expires should notify the instructor in writing. The board and/or administrative will move to fill a vacated position.

Public Announcements. While members are expected and encouraged to discuss the instructional program within the community, members will not report opinions expressed in meetings, nor will they report independently on council action.

ILLUSTRATION 2-2.
SAMPLE BYLAWS

Bylaws
(Name of Council)
(Name of Local Education Agency or Institution)

Article 1
Council Operation

- Section 1. Meeting will be held at a time and date specified by the council.
- Section 2. At least (number of) meetings will be held each school year. The exact number of meetings will be determined by the annual program of work.
- Section 3. The executive committee will develop the agenda for each meeting.
- Section 4. The program of work will be a consideration in setting the agenda for each meeting.
- Section 5. Discussion to obtain consensus will be the prevailing procedure used at meetings. Parliamentary procedure will be used when a decision is to be recorded and transmitted as a recommendation.
- Section 6. A quorum will consist of a simple majority of appointed members.
- Section 7. Meeting minutes will be recorded for each meeting and distributed to each member and appropriate school officials.

Article II
Subcommittees

- Section 1. Standing subcommittees should be established for such areas as deemed necessary by the chairperson.
- Section 2. Subcommittees may be of any size.
- Section 3. Subcommittees will elect their own chairs.

Article III
Officers

- Section 1. Officers will be elected by a simple majority. Officers will serve a one-year term and may be re-elected.
- Section 2. Officers will include a chair, a vice chair, and a secretary.

Section 3. Officers will be elected at the first meeting of each new year.

Article IV
Member Responsibilities

Section 1. Each member will attend meetings and participate in work activities.

Section 2. Each member will study the issues or problems that come before the council.

Article V
Program of Work

Section 1. An annual program of work will be established by the council during its first two meetings each year. Included in the program of work should be goals, objectives, tasks, time lines, person(s) responsible, and date completed.

Bylaws adopted (date)

PART 3. PLANNING AND CONDUCTING LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Officers direct, coordinate, and facilitate the work of the council. Planning and conducting meetings deserve special attention so that time is well spent and effort is focused.

PLANNING MEETINGS

Successful councils meet regularly. Meeting dates are set by the group during development of the annual program of work. Notice of advisory council meetings should be publicized, and meetings should be open to the public. Consult with the appropriate administrator regarding procedures that are followed in the system.

Each meeting is focused on particular content or issues, held in a comfortable location, and planned well in advance of the meeting dates. The general planning process involves reviewing minutes of the last several meetings and the annual program of work in order to create the meeting agenda. Agendas help prevent meetings from becoming “gripe sessions” for instructors or members.

The social aspects of the meeting, such as simple refreshments, contribute to group morale and commitment. Some meetings could be held away from the school in local businesses or community facilities to encourage business and community partnerships. In preparation for the meeting:

- Establish and publicize time, date, and location of each meeting.
- Arrange for meeting room and equipment.
- Notify council members and appropriate school officials in writing of meeting date and agenda.
- Arrange for refreshments, meals, special presentations, etc., if appropriate.
- Confirm all arrangements several days before meeting.
- Call council members and staff to remind them of the meeting.
- Prepare materials for issues to be addressed.

Emphasis on attendance and participation in council work builds commitment and interest. A meeting notice and agenda should be sent in advance to members and appropriate school officials. Minutes from the last meeting should be included unless sent previously. Background materials necessary for completing the work at the upcoming meeting should also be included.

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

The following guidelines are useful for managing group activity and interaction at council meetings:

- State the purpose of the meeting and review the agenda. Some councils set goals or objectives for each meeting as a way of focusing on purposes.
- Encourage all members to speak and to respect the rights and opinion of each individual.

- Ask clarifying questions.
- Periodically, summarize discussion, and point out the connections and contradictions between points.
- Use parliamentary procedures for decisions; otherwise, encourage open and informal discussion. The majority rules, but the minority opinion must be heard.
- Consider and resolve one issue at a time.
- Explore and encourage all points of view in working toward consensus.
- Show strong interest in attendance, ideas, and the program of work.
- Distribute work assignments throughout the group.
- Make assignments and work tasks clear and specific; explain expectations, time lines, and products. Discuss background of issues so that everyone shares a common understanding of the terminology and the importance of the problems.
- Structure the meeting to avoid wasted time. This conveys a sense of organization, purpose, and productivity.
- Keep members informed of activities and progress.
- Recognize and reward members. Even a simple thank you is an effective reinforcement.
- Evaluate council work regularly.

The atmosphere for interaction is critical. It is through discussion that members present views and develop findings, while moving toward consensus. The most productive atmosphere in a group meeting is a supportive atmosphere. The least productive atmosphere is a defensive one. Creating a productive atmosphere is time well spent.

The tone for the year is set by the first or second meeting. The following ideas help establish a positive tone:

- Concentrate on establishing a friendly atmosphere, coupled with a seriousness of purpose and the background information necessary to begin the job.
- Emphasize that each member's knowledge and experience are unique and of great potential value to the program.
- Tour the facilities.
- Meet students enrolled in the vocational program.
- Invite board and/or administrative officials to a meeting.
- Provide the opportunity for members to begin to know one another in a social context, perhaps during a meal or social time.
- Discuss the expectations for council work and for member behavior.
- Discuss future meetings, program needs, and past work.
- Call meeting to order and adjourn at the appointed times.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

As the official record of council activities, minutes keep individuals and groups informed about the council's concerns, decisions, and activities. They remind members of the group's progress; they document the council's productivity and its contribution to the vocational technical program.

Keeping the minutes takes time, skill and persistence. Minutes must be accurate, thorough, maintained promptly and continuously, uniform in style, and document what took place at the meeting.

Illustration 3-1 is an example of typical minutes for an advisory council. Specific comments and ideas are attributed to individual members. When done in a supportive way, crediting individuals with specific ideas in the minutes is a very effective method of reinforcing active member participation.

ILLUSTRATION 3-1.
SAMPLE MINUTES

**Health Occupations
Local Advisory Council Meeting
November 15, 1990
Cafeteria
Vocational Technical Center**

Minutes

Members Present: Helen Chen, Chuck Bunn, Cecilia Day, Carrie Johnson, Kris Kristoph, Karen Long, Lane Nelson, Carl Cox, and Mattie Walk.

Members Absent: Elizabeth Alexander, Brad Luftus.

Others Present: Phyllis Beckman, Vocational Director.

Call to Order: Chair Long called the meeting to order at 12 noon and expressed appreciation for attendance and participation. She stressed the importance of the council's continuing support and assistance. Dr. Phyllis Beckman, vocational director, greeted the council. Her greeting further assured the council of its importance to educational goals and program vitality.

Minutes: Minutes of the last meeting were approved as submitted.

Unfinished Business: No unfinished business was brought before the council.

New Business: Chair Long asked the council to make suggestions concerning, "What new requirements does the health field ask of entry-level employees?"

Mr. Nelson indicated that a computer or data processing back ground would be helpful for employees since most tasks require the use of a central computer connecting all county hospitals. Ms. Johnson further emphasized the need for computer training. She indicated that an employee would be more skilled with prior computer knowledge. It was the consensus of the council that computer training should be added to the Health Occupations program as soon as possible. Brands suggested were Hewlett-Packard, IBM, and Wang. The chair was asked to appoint a subcommittee prior to the next meeting to investigate several kinds of computers and software for possible purchase.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Mattie Walk, Secretary

PART 4. PLANNING A LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCIL PROGRAM OF WORK

To be an effective local advisory council, the work of the council must be organized and highly structured. This does not mean it has to be complicated. This guide provides a simple process that leads the council through a series of steps to plan and carry out a program of work.

The overall purpose of the local advisory council is to help schools and institutions improve and modernize the quality of instruction in vocational technical education. In developing a program of work, the councils should continually keep two things in mind. One is the need of the program. The second is the requirements of the business community.

To help local advisory councils plan an effective program of work, this guide suggests that a sequence of planning steps be used. These include:

- Establishing annual priorities
- Specifying council activities
- Developing planning tasks
- Assigning responsibilities
- Establishing time lines

This part of the guide expands on each of these five planning steps. Included in this section are sample LAC programs of work.

ESTABLISHING ANNUAL PRIORITIES

In developing a program of work, the first thing the local advisory council must do is decide what it is they want to accomplish. This first step is a process identifying and establishing what it is they want to accomplish. The first step is a process identifying and establishing priorities regarding the function of the council over the course of the school year.

This guide lists twelve very broad functions, which are generally performed by advisory councils. These functions include:

- Curriculum evaluation
- Facility and equipment reviews
- Instructional resource coordination
- Student placement
- Analyzing work community needs
- Identifying new technologies
- Program promotion and public relations
- Long and short range planning
- Student organizations
- Business/industry linkages
- Program of work
- Recommendation reports

These council functions are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather are areas of discussion the council may want to consider in determining the overall needs of the program. The administrator and/or the instructor are excellent resources to help identify the needs of the program.

There are three items that should be considered as the council discusses the selection of the council functions. These include a discussion of past accomplishments, current and future needs of the program, and the current and future needs of the community. The number of functions the council selects should be kept manageable. In other words, don't take on more than the council can realistically accomplish.

SPECIFYING COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Once the council has identified its functions, the discussion should become more specific in terms of exactly what it is the council wants to accomplish.

This guide outlines a series of activities the council may want to consider as they plan their program of work. These activities include:

Public Relation Activities

- Promote community awareness of vocational technical education through effective media coverage and marketing efforts.
- Make formal presentations of vocational education programs and activities to civic and service groups.
- Establish scholarships and financial aid programs for deserving students.
- Establish awards programs to recognize outstanding students, teachers, administrators, and community leaders.
- Promote media coverage of special events, make presentations to curriculum committees, and school board meetings.

Curriculum Activities

- Review curriculum materials for state-of-the-art content.
- Identify competency levels and performance standards.
- Recommend technical resources personnel.
- Provide classroom speakers from business and industry.
- Recommend and/or provide tours and field trips experiences.
- Assist instructors in obtaining instructional supplies and equipment.
- Review curriculum to ensure basic skills content.
- Assist in securing adequate funding of vocational technical education programs.
- Recommend realistic safety policies.
- Recommend instructional materials, equipment, and facilities for serving specialized training needs.

Community Resource Activities

- Identify community resource people.
- Recommend tours and field trip experiences.
- Recommend speakers.

Recruitment Activities

- Assist in reviewing teacher selection criteria.
- Assist in recruiting new staff.
- Assist in recruiting new students – secondary, postsecondary, and adult.

Student Organization Activities

- Assist in developing competitive skill events.
- Judge competitive skill events.
- Sponsor student organization activities.
- Sponsor or collect contributions of equipment and supplies for skill events.
- Arrange for display space to promote student organizations and special events.

Job Placement Activities

- Organize employer/student conferences.
- Notify teachers of job openings for students.
- Provide students with cooperative training sites.
- Promote potential cooperative training sites with other employers.
- Assist students in developing interviewing skills.
- Recommend employability skills curriculum content.
- Conduct occupational surveys.

Staff Development Activities

- Provide in-service activities on current methods and processes for instructors.
- Provide skilled technicians to supplement teacher's experience.
- Support participation of instructors in technical workshops or factory schools.

Program Review and Evaluation Activities

- Review program goals and objectives.
- Participate on program evaluation teams.
- Compare program accomplishments with program objectives.
- Compare student performance standards to business/industry standards.
- Review adequacy of facility as a training site.
- Evaluate quality and quantity of graduates and job placement.
- Make recommendations for program improvement.
- Give periodic reports to administration or school boards.

Legislative Activities

- Provide tours for legislators through vocational technical training facilities.

- Communicate with legislators about vocational technical education needs.
- Gather information on new legislation.
- Promote legislative support for vocational technical education.

This list of activities is not all-inclusive and should be viewed as possible activities for consideration. Again, the functions and activities should match the needs of the program and community.

DEVELOPING PLANNING TASKS

Having selected the council activities, discussion should center on how the council plans to carry out the activities. A good exercise to use is “brainstorming,” where council members are encouraged to discuss a wide variety of ideas in which each activity could be accomplished. This is a unique phase of the planning process in that it draws on the diverse background and expertise of each council member to determine the best course of action to accomplish a particular activity.

Several factors need to be considered, including time, cost, and community/school support, etc. Some of these factors may prohibit the council from designing the most effective method for carrying out a given activity. As a result, the council may have to develop alternative planning tasks to accomplish the same end. These planning tasks should be sequenced in the logical order in which they are to be carried out.

ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to accomplish each planning task, an individual or individuals must be assigned to carry it out. In some cases, the entire council may be assigned while other tasks may best be assigned to the instructor or individual council members. Individuals assigned should have a clear understanding of what is expected. It would be a good practice for the council chairperson to review and discuss each planning task with the entire council so that there is a clear understanding of each task.

ESTABLISHING TIMELINES

In addition to clearly understanding what it to be accomplished, each person assigned to a specific planning task should know when the task is to be completed. By establishing timelines for each planning task, the individual member or instructor assigned to a given task can plan accordingly. Tasks completed by the entire council will generally be performed during regular council meetings. This will necessitate the setting of future meeting dates well in advance. Tasks assigned to individual members may need to be completed prior to meetings so that a status report can be presented during the council meeting.

PART 5. CARRYING OUT A LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCIL PROGRAM OF WORK

The desired outcome of any LAC program of work is either council recommendation or a specific council action. If the council specifies activities, which relate to an “advising” role, the end result would be a recommendation for the school or program to consider specific action. On the other hand, if the LAC program of work calls for more of an “assisting” or “advocacy” role, the end result would be the council’s carrying out specific action to accomplish a given activity. Both recommendation and council action have one overall intent, which is to improve and modernize the program in order to better serve the needs of the students and the community.

The following information describes a process for developing council recommendations, council actions, and periodic review of the LAC program of work.

FORMULATING LAC RECOMMENDATIONS

Under the advising role, the local advisory council may want to conduct activities designed to study or assess specific areas of the vocational technical program. The conclusions and findings of such activities may call for recommended changes in various aspects of the program.

Recommendations should be formulated after the council has had sufficient time to study and discuss a specific issue and to thoroughly review and discuss the specific recommendation(s). It should be recorded in the minutes that the council discussed the recommendations, and that it approved them either by consensus or majority vote. Recommendations should be brief (one to two sentences). They should be clear and concise and tell the school/program the specific action that the council wants considered. Some recommendations may need to be preceded by a rationale statement. This rationale should include why such recommended changes are needed and how they would be beneficial to the program, school, and/or community. Illustration 5-1 gives examples of local advisory council recommendations.

The number of recommendations should be kept to a minimum. One to three sound, well-stated recommendations in one year could prove helpful as schools move to improve and modernize their programs.

The council members must remember that they have no programmatic, administrative, or legislative authority. Both the council and the board/administration should view their recommendations as advisory in nature.

School and institutions have long recognized the importance of having citizen input. The most effective way to strengthen this broad-based input is to promote the local advisory council as a partnership between the school or institution and the community. For this partnership to be effective, the board and/or administrative official should take the time and effort to officially review and consider the recommendations and actions of the council and respond accordingly.

When a recommendation is denied, it would be appropriate for the local advisory council or the board and/or administrative official to call for a meeting to discuss the reason for the denial.

Alternative methods for meeting the intent of the recommendation may also be discussed. Restraints on time, budget, personnel, and other resources could be reasons why some recommendations are not acted upon by the board or administration.

In turn, the council needs to consider the reason why their recommendation was not accepted, respect the authority of the board and/or administrative official, and move on to considering alternative ways of improving or modernizing vocational technical education.

LOCAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ACTION

When the local advisory council dedicates its program of work to the role of “assisting” or “advocacy” there may not be a need to formulate specific recommendations. Rather, the outcomes of the program of work may be for the council itself to carry out specific activities. Judging competitive skill events, establishing a scholarship program, and assisting students in developing interviewing skills are examples of specific council action.

The board and/or administrative official should be kept informed as to any action taken by the council. It may be appropriate for the council to meet with the board or top administrative officials to brief them on council action on an annual basis. If a presentation cannot be arranged, a brief council report should be submitted for their consideration or for informational purposes.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE LAC PROGRAM OF WORK

The local advisory council should routinely evaluate or review the program of work. This review can be helpful as the council carries out the functions, activities, and tasks. Specifically, a review can help the council in determining the following:

- The extent to which it is accomplishing the program of work.
- The extent to which the recommendations and actions have strengthened and modernized the program.
- Future direction, functions, and activities for the council.

The review can be either formal or informal. The goal of the review is to help the council determine its overall effectiveness. As a result of the review, the council may determine ways it can improve its operational procedures or redirect the council in other areas of concern. The instructor and/or administrator can be a valuable resource in this review process.

ILLUSTRATION 5-1.

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Technology Education program should consider adding new units of instruction in the areas of computer-aided drafting and laser technology. To accommodate the additional time required, the program should consider reducing its wood technology unit from 18 weeks to 6 or 9 weeks.
- The Trade and Industrial programs should consider officially adopting the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) standards for updating program Safety policies. In addition, the school should consider obtaining or developing NIOSH units of instruction and requiring students to follow these safety standards.
- The board and/or administrative official should consider sending the Trade and Industrial instructor to a factory school to update his/her skills in the latest technology of the trade. The local advisory council will help defray some of the costs for his/her participation.
- The Consumer and Homemaking instructor should consider team-teaching units of instruction on coping, stress, suicide prevention, and drug and alcohol prevention with Health Education.
- The board and/or administrative official should consider installing a larger ventilation system for the newly expanded shop area.
- The board and/or administrative official should consider utilizing the loft area in the shop as a classroom. This would provide larger lab space for students to carry out their shop assignments.
- The Carpentry program should consider constructing a small commercial building for the class project. This would provide an opportunity for students to work with material other than that found in residential buildings.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For additional information on local advisory councils contact:

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